

Congresswoman

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



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NYC Small Businesses Need Assistance Following Blackout

Relief for New York small businesses adversely affected by the 2003 blackout was requested by Congresswoman Velázquez from the Small Business Administration (SBA) in the form of disaster loans.

"The repercussions of the 2003 power outage were felt throughout our city and state, as many small businesses struggled to restart their operations and recover from revenue losses," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "In leaving many of New York's small companies without electricity or clean water for several days, the blackout has severely impacted their near-term profitability and jeopardized their long-term financial future."

Among those small businesses most affected by the blackout were restaurants, grocery stores, and other food service companies that rely on perishable goods and clean water. Many of these businesses were not equipped with backup generators and lost millions of dollars in spoiled food stocks. It is reported that the blackout cost area restaurants \$100 million in revenue

losses and the city overall lost approximately \$750 million in revenue.

Congresswoman Velázquez called on the president and the SBA Administrator, Hector Barreto, to provide federal disaster loans to struggling businesses in both New York City and the other areas hard hit by the 2003 blackout. SBA disaster loans play a pivotal role in preserving the financial health of our nation's local economies by permitting small businesses to access capital and stave off bankruptcy when disaster strikes.

"Small businesses are the backbone of New York's economy, making up the large majority of companies and creating three-fourths of all new jobs," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "First, small businesses were hard hit by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, then there was the SARS scare, and now the blackout – all during a time when both our city's economy – and our nation's as a whole – remain in a downturn. Small businesses are key players in our economic recovery, but we need to give them the right tools – and the SBA disaster loans would certainly be one of them."

National Night Out: Velázquez Speaks Out Against Crime

During a National Night Out Against Crime event in Brooklyn, Congresswoman Velázquez joined members of the 90 Precinct to talk about fighting crime and violence in the community.

"Thanks to our dedicated police force and community members, we are able to fight crime in this area together," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Tonight, we bring together citizens, community groups, businesses, and local officials to show our solidarity in the fight against crime in our neighborhoods and to thank our law enforcement officials for their work."

National Night Out 2003 in both New York City and across the nation was marked by anti-crime marches, youth events, and crime prevention tips sessions during the hours between noon and 10 p.m.

This year's event celebrated the successes of the New York Police Department and community in reducing crime. In addition, it was an opportunity to promote further public safety and quality of life enhancements throughout the area. Most of the activities were sponsored by the precinct, community councils, and local businesses donated goods and services.

In response to concerns over crime, National Town Watch, a small group in Pennsylvania founded National Night Out twenty years ago. The National Town Watch chose the first Tuesday of August to give crime a "going away party." Local communities did this by turning on their porch lights and walking



Congresswoman Velázquez joins the 90th precinct at the National Night Out event in Brooklyn.

around neighborhoods. National Night Out is now celebrated throughout the country every August and also in several other countries around the world.

The issue of crime is a top priority for Congresswoman Velázquez. She is dedicated to cracking down on crime and protecting families and children living in her district. She has fought to head off juvenile crime by offering more after-school opportunities for at-risk youth. She has also pushed to obtain additional federal funding and resources for important anti-crime initiatives.

Senior Citizens Recognized for Attaining U.S. Citizenship

Certificates of special recognition were presented to several senior citizens at the Sunnyside Senior Center for becoming U.S. citizens.

"These residents have fulfilled their American dream and have become citizens of the United States," said Congresswoman Velázquez. "I am so proud to recognize this significant moment in their lives and for the journey that they made to achieve this goal. There is such a sense of pride among the residents in my district that have come this far, and it is these individuals that fill our community with strength."

Congresswoman Velázquez also acknowledged the hard work and commitment of the Sunnyside Senior Center Board of Directors and their program director, Diana Cruz, to the senior community.

"The senior centers in our community are invaluable because of the services they provide to our elderly residents," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Over 250,000 people apply for U.S. citizenship every year and it is so wonderful to see elderly residents attaining it. Because of the care and services these senior centers provide in our neighborhood, the elderly population is able to enjoy its independence and U.S. citizenship."



Award recipient Maria Morris, Congresswoman Velázquez, , Rosa Castillo and the Director of the Sunnyside Senior Center, Diana Cruz.

Grants Workshop Offers Advice on Obtaining Funding

A free grants workshop was hosted by Congresswoman Velázquez along with officials from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the New York City Department of Aging and the Foundation Center.

"Members of local organizations are looking for creative ways to finance their programs today and this workshop was a wonderful opportunity for them to gain this knowledge," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "A decrease in funding has been felt by all levels of government, making financing programs difficult. But there are grants available and I will continue to work to ensure that the residents in my district are aware of possible funding sources. These

organizations provide extremely valuable services to our community and they deserve to continue to flourish."

The groups joined together to discuss future funding opportunities and to provide tips on grant proposal writing. Representatives from the Foundation Center were present to discuss grant proposal writing for foundations. The workshop offered alternative solutions to helping local organizations locate monetary assistance during a time when many are experiencing decreases in funding.

Congresswoman Velázquez distributes a federal grants alert every two weeks to local organizations in her district.

Request for Federal Investigation into EPA Following 9/11

Congresswoman Velázquez called for a federal investigation into the inconsistencies of public health information released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) following the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

"Since the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, I have continuously called upon the EPA to undertake immediate measures to evaluate and mitigate the effects of the World Trade Center plume on Brooklyn residents," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The EPA repeatedly assured my office and local residents that the air quality was safe, and that clean up efforts did not need to be expanded into Brooklyn. However, the EPA Inspector General recently released a scathing report documenting the administration's efforts to mislead New York residents about the health risks they faced in the weeks and months following the terrorist attacks."

The EPA denied any deception in response to the report and claimed that virtually all of the Inspector General's recommendations were already being implemented

before the report was released. Due to the discrepancies in information, and the serious health consequences for New York residents, Congresswoman Velázquez requested that the General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, look into the situation for answers.

In her request, she asked for an evaluation of the accuracy of public information by EPA regarding the air quality and health risks for New York City residents in the weeks and months following September 11. In addition she asked for a determination of the extent to which all of the recommendations in the EPA Inspector General's report were being implemented, specifically including an evaluation of the potential health risks of pollutants in workplaces and areas north of Canal Street and in Brooklyn. Congresswoman Velázquez also asked for a review of preparedness improvements that EPA had implemented in the past 2 years, and an analysis of EPA's current capacity to effectively respond to other possible disasters of this magnitude.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Department of Education

Make the Road By Walking -- \$496,750

to start a community and literacy arts program for community members of all ages

Department of Housing and Urban Development

New York City -- \$500,000

to conduct lead safety outreach in two high-risk communities: Astoria and East Flatbush/Flatbush

Department of Education

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice -- \$450,000

for 21st century community learning centers/after school learning centers

Department of Education

Community School District 32 -- \$114,055

for foreign language assistance

Department of Education

New York State -- \$597,207,574

to provide free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities

Department of Health and Human Services

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene -- \$745,281

grants for childrens'immunization and vaccines

Department of Health and Human Services

New York City Administration for Children's Services -- \$14,786,335

for the Head Start program